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The Mystery of Suffering

FRANCIS J. CONNELL, C.S.S.R., S.T.D.

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ONE of the most profound mysteries of life is the vast amount of suffering that prevails in the world. Every human being experiences some form of pain in the course of his journey from the cradle to the grave. Sometimes it is a bodily affliction—the deathlike torpor of paralysis, the piercing agony of cancer, the insidious blight of consumption, the pathetic helplessness of advanced age. Sometimes it is affliction of soul—the untimely death of a loved one, the complete failure of a life-work, the unexpected disloyalty of a trusted friend, the disruption of domestic peace by quarrels and misunderstandings. Suffering is no respecter of persons. It can find its way into the mansions of the rich as well as into the hovels of the poor. It can crush the heart of the monarch as well as the heart of his lowliest subject. It can cripple the vigorous limbs of the young as well as the wasted bodies of the aged. In recent years science has done much to relieve human misery; and as time goes on much more will undoubtedly be accomplished toward this praiseworthy end. But, as we all know, however numerous and effective may be the remedies and the

sedatives and the artificial helps that future generations may devise for the alleviation of suffering, there will be aching bodies and grieving hearts in this world as long as the human race shall last.

I have said that the prevalence of suffering is a mystery. The mystery consists in the difficulty of reconciling the evident fact that many harrowing evils afflict mankind with the Christian teaching that the human race is under the protection of a God of goodness and of mercy. This difficulty furnishes one of the stock objections of the atheist. "If there were a God of love watching over us from the heavens," he argues, "how could He gaze on the appalling sufferings that oppress His earthly creatures day after day, and yet remain so pitiless, so unmoved? How could a God of goodness give men life, and then allow life to rack their bodies and to sear their souls? Either there is no God, or if there be a God, He has no concern, no love for the human race."

To shallow intellects this argument makes a strong appeal. But any intelligent and fair-minded person who will study the problem from all angles will conclude that the existence of suffering in the world, instead of constituting an obstacle to our faith in God, rather strengthens our belief in a Supreme Being who in His dealings with His creatures is all-wise, all-just, all-merciful.

MAN HAS FREE WILL

In the first place, we must not forget that many of the misfortunes that fall to the lot of human beings are of their own making. Our Creator has given each of us the marvelous power of free will—the power of choosing either to do right or to do wrong. And when a person abuses this precious gift of free will by deliberately transgressing God's law, why should he complain if he thereby brings on himself painful consequences? The man who gives free rein to sensuality

or to intemperance has only himself to blame if a fatal disease attacks him. The man who is harsh and unjust toward his relatives and friends is only reaping as he sowed if in his declining years he finds himself friendless and alone. The man who squanders his money on luxuries and amusements has no reason to complain if eventually he is reduced to direst poverty. We often say that nature punishes those who violate its laws; but in reality it is the God of nature, manifesting His justice.

Yet, even when suffering is the well deserved punishment of sin, the gentle hand of God often draws good out of evil. Our heavenly Father permits misfortune to befall the sinner, not only to punish him but chiefly to impress him with the gravity of his faults and to move him to seek pardon. It was only when he was reduced to eating the husks of swine that the prodigal son realized how low he had fallen and resolved to return to his father's house. It was only when he was gasping forth his soul in the throes of an agonizing death that the thief crucified beside Christ turned to our Saviour with the humble prayer: "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom" (Luke xxiii, 42). And when suffering inspires the sinner to repent and to turn back to God, it is no longer an evil but a priceless blessing.

However, it would be false to conclude that suffering is always the punishment of sin. Oftentimes men and women who are leading exemplary lives, who are conscientious in all their duties both to God and to their fellow-creatures, are overwhelmed with afflictions. Where is God's justice, where His mercy in such cases?

SUFFERING SOMETIMES A BLESSING

If life ended with the grave, it would indeed be difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the sufferings of good-living people with the idea of a just and merci-

ful Creator. But life does not end with the grave. Our present existence is only a period of probation and of preparation for an unending existence after death. And so, whatever tends to make us more virtuous, more pleasing to God, more worthy of eternal happiness, is a true blessing, even though it comes in the form of suffering. Now, by patiently enduring life's trials with submission to God's will a person is rendered more courageous, more spiritual-minded, more worthy of God's love. If you would find the most staunch and saintly characters in this world, seek them among those men and women who have been called on to bear a heavy burden of pain, and who have accepted it with a cheerful smile and a heartfelt: "God's will be done." When it is received in this way, suffering chastens the soul and cleanses it of the dross of its imperfections—its selfishness, its pride, its cowardice—just as the glowing crucible refines the ore of its baser metals and leaves the pure, glittering gold. And by bearing grievous affliction generously and bravely from a lofty spiritual motive, a person manifests his true greatness of character. A soldier best proves his valor by the way he reacts to danger on the field of battle; and so too, we best prove our virtue by the way we react to the trials of life.

To those who bear their burdens bravely for His sake our heavenly Father promises a reward exceeding great. In His sublime Sermon on the Mount Jesus Christ lays special stress on the blessedness involved in the patient endurance of suffering: "Blessed are they that mourn . . . Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake . . . Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you untruly for my sake"—and then the Master adds the reason why patient suffering for His sake is so blessed a thing: "For your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v, 5-12). It was this thought that inspired St. Paul, who had suffered so long so

keenly for Christ, to exclaim: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come" (Romans viii, 18).

When suffering is viewed from this spiritual aspect, does it provide any reasonable objection to the existence of God or to the goodness of God? Or rather does it not teach us that just because He is so good and so attentive to our real welfare, God allows us to suffer so that we may prove our fidelity to Him and grow in His love and merit a rich reward in heaven.

SUFFERING BRINGS US CLOSER TO GOD

If life were filled with happiness, if no pain of body or anguish of soul ever troubled us, we should easily forget the true goal of our earthly existence. We should center our hearts on the worthless baubles of this world and pay no heed to the imperishable treasures of heaven. But suffering fixes our attention on the things of real value. When sorrows weigh heavily upon us, and each dawn means only the beginning of another day of weariness and of affliction, then we think hopefully of the joys of heaven and we even long for rest in the bosom of God as the storm-tossed sailor longs for the calm of the peaceful harbor. Even in the present life suffering can bring us closer to God, for in the hour of desolation we can best find strength and consolation in the Heart of Him who said: "Come to me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi, 28).

If we could read the mind of God we should see that frequently He sends us some sorrow for the express purpose of saving us from greater harm. He knows our individual weaknesses of character; and at times, when He foresees that a benefit would be misused, He takes it from us. One of the saddest spectacles this world affords is the young mother, her heart crushed with anguish, bending over the death-bed of her child. Yet, who can tell? Perhaps if that child lived to ma-

turity he would cause his mother far greater pain; and as an act of mercy God has taken him to Himself in the beauty of his innocence. What of the poor mother that sees her son condemned to a criminal's ignominious doom—does she not wish that death had taken him when he was a babe in her arms? Only when we behold our Creator face to face shall we realize that many of life's afflictions were in reality gifts of His love, designed to preserve us from greater evils which human folly and weakness would otherwise have brought upon us.

The blessings of suffering are not confined to the actual sufferer. Those who behold him in his misery or want and are thereby moved to sympathy and to charity share in the spiritual benefits of his affliction. Seventy years ago on the Island of Molokai in the Pacific Ocean there was a colony of lepers, without medical aid and without religious consolations. In 1873 a priest named Father Damien came to this island; and for sixteen years he ministered both to the bodies and to the souls of those outcasts. And as he bound up their rotting limbs and spoke to them words of hope and administered to them the consoling rites of the Catholic Church, he himself grew to heroic stature in self-sacrifice and in generosity. When in 1889 Father Damien at last found rest in a leper's grave, he left the world an example of Christ-like charity that will be an inspiration for mankind until the end of time. But we should not have had this sublime example if there had not been on Molokai a group of men and women, hideous with the corruption of a living death, beneath whose putrid sores Damien beheld the image of a God of love.

THE GLORY OF SUFFERING

That He might impress us with the glory of suffering, God spared not His own Son. During His earthly life Jesus Christ endured physical and mental pain

such as no other man has ever borne. And He did so, not only to make satisfaction for the sins of mankind but also to teach us how to suffer. Three and thirty years He dwelt on earth—years of poverty, toil, disappointment, humiliation, crowned with a death of agony on the cross. Yet ever and always from the depths of His anguished heart arose the prayer: "Father, not my will but thine be done" (Luke xxii, 42). And to prove that to share His sufferings is a privilege of those who are dear to Him, He allowed His beloved mother to stand beneath His cross on that first Good Friday, her soul pierced with a sword of sorrow. He made the willing acceptance of trials the outstanding characteristic of His loyal followers, for He said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. xvi, 24). And so, in those who have learned to bear the cross bravely the spirit of Christ lives on, teaching the world the divine dignity of suffering.

Bear your sorrows bravely and cheerfully, receive them from the hand of God as gifts of His wisdom and love. And when the burden grows too heavy for your own strength, turn to Him who hung upon the cross of Calvary, and ask Him for a share of His courage and patience. Remember that even in the darkest hour your heavenly Father is at your side, and that if you remain steadfast in His grace and love, no real harm can come to you. Life is very brief; and for those who bear its burdens patiently there is prepared a great reward in the kingdom beyond the stars, where sorrow shall be no more, and where faith shall be crowned with the everlasting vision of God.

Christian Thinking Is Way to Peace

JAMES M. GILLIS. C.S.P.

Address delivered in Washington, February 9, 1938, under the auspices of the Washington Convert League of the Catholic Daughters of America. N. C. W. C. News Service.

DIPLOMATS and financiers cannot keep America out of war; they do not know how. By our wills we can avert another war. But here let me warn you to put not your trust in princes. And by that I mean diplomats, statesmen, politicians. Diplomats and statesmen make war; diplomatic maneuvering has time and again laid the scene for war. Witness the Versailles Treaty. A. Huxley has pointed out that the Versailles Treaty more than any other factor is responsible for Hitlerism in Germany today. It is not that diplomats are dishonest, but that they do not know the way out.

Secondly, put not your trust in financiers. In my lifetime there have been five depressions—sufficient proof that something is wrong somewhere. Financiers can break the peace of the world but their financial machinations cannot build up that world again.

Upon whom then can we depend for keeping America out of war? I answer, unless a whole people be born again to charity and love of fellow-man, this world is doomed. I believe in the people, but the people must reconstruct their thinking. They must root out national hatred and race hatred.

From time immemorial the question: "What people live on the other side of the mountain?" has been answered, "Oh, they are terrible, they've one eye in their forehead and one eye in the back of their head." The same exists today. Witness the prevalent attitudes: "He is just a Hun and you know what Huns are," or

the references to Italians as "wops," to Canadians as "Canuchs—and they come five at a lick at that!"

This contempt for the other fellow is the cause of war. If you cherish this kind of thinking you are a war-maker. We have no right to point our finger and say, "Look how the French hate the Italians"—keep quiet about it. I will go the full limit: if a white man discriminates against a black because he is black, if he cherishes race hatred he has no reason to complain of present conditions. If you hate the black, the Jew, the Italian, you had better get down on your knees and beg God's mercy, because in the final analysis you are a cause of war.

Why don't we do our own thinking? We know how we were the victims of the malicious, lying propaganda of the World War. People who have lived in Germany, in Italy, in France, who have learned to speak their language and moved among these people tell me that they are all lovable. So are all people lovable, just like you and I. If the people would just keep their heads, refuse to be stampeded, forbid getting angry, then no matter what financiers and diplomats would do we would have no war. Our part in the program for peace is to eradicate race and national hatred and in its place cultivate brotherly love for all men.

I am a patriot, but I sound this warning: beware of excessive nationalism. Some think that the sun rises on Long Island and sets in California and the rest of the world has no sun. Never let yourself be cast under the spell of a Fourth of July orator. Keep your wits about you, do your own thinking. If we could get five hundred million to think that way, wars and rumors of war would be wiped out entirely.

Ultimately the fundamental principle that governs the justice or injustice of war is the spirit of Jesus Christ. Before the Blessed Sacrament we should ask Him: "What sayest Thou, O Lord, about wars?"

The condition of the Jews in Palestine at the time of Our Lord was about the same as that of the Irish under the English, and yet our Lord's attitude is characterized by "put up thy sword into thy scabbard." Daniel O'Connell said that the freedom of Ireland was not worth the shedding of one drop of blood. And Christ would have said the same.

We can do our part for the preservation of peace by following the spirit of Christ: by doing our own thinking, by rooting out hatred and cultivating a love for all men.

"The Altar Is Christ"

SISTER JULIE, O.P.

Reprinted from Orate Fratres, October 31, 1937.

THERE are two pictures in my memory which, by their striking contrast, bring into prominence the inner glory, the unseen beauty of the Christian altar. One was shown by Father Hubbard, the "glacier priest," illustrating a lecture on his Alaskan expeditions. It represented the intrepid Jesuit beginning to celebrate holy Mass at an altar placed on a small ledge of rock in the crater of an Alaskan volcano, a semi-active volcano, with gaseous vapors rising from the fissured floor of the crater, and wind-blown masses of smoke and gas floating around the head of the priest. The familiar sight of an altar ready for Mass, its white linen gleaming against the gray of the rocks, shining through the dun smoke and the gloomy atmosphere, with the familiar veiled chalice in the center and the miniature Mass cards, the whole looking so small and perishable in that vast sombre scene, made an indelible impression on my mind. It was not that Mass was being offered in a spot where men had not trodden before, not that one of the barrenest places on earth

was being sanctified, glorified, consecrated to the worship of the Blessed Trinity; not this glory alone made the scene unforgettable. Very striking was the simplicity and smallness and fragility of the throne of God in that vast noxious amphitheatre. It looked like a miniature altar precariously perched on its small rock ledge. But it was unmistakably the throne of God, for a priest in the age-old vestments consecrated to the high function of sacrifice was ready to begin Mass.

The other picture, which makes a startling contrast to this one is a scene I witnessed in St. Peter's, Rome, on a Holy Thursday. It was the ceremony of the washing of the high altar, a spectacle of splendid pageantry now peculiar to St. Peter's, once in general use. After Tenebrae, all the clergy in the sanctuary, canons and monsignori to the number of one hundred or more, wearing copes and carrying what appeared to be pale yellow pompons, or great-headed chrysanthemums, went in procession to the papal altar under its great bronze canopy, with its beautiful marble free of its vesture. On it had been placed seven flagons of wine and water (as we learned later). The clergy, in rows of six, approached the altar, the first six pouring the contents of the flagons, the second row spreading the mixture to every part of the holy table, each row in turn brushing the gleaming marble with their ornamental brushes. Last came the officiating minister, who happened to be Cardinal Pacelli, carrying a larger pompon, with which he brushed dry the great altar. We saw one of the pompons later and were surprised to discover that they were made of palm such as we receive on Palm Sunday, curiously woven into globes of yellow.

The dignity, impressiveness, and splendor of this ceremony made it unforgettable. In both these pictures I have described, though the contrast between them is so striking, it is the same altar which is the

center; the altar in the wilderness and the altar in the magnificent setting of St. Peter's are the same. And the external beauty, grandeur, and dignity of the papal altar, erected on the hallowed place of the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, and reserved exclusively for the use of his representative, the visible head of the Church, does not differentiate it from that small stone table in the wilderness at which a simple priest is officiating. For the small slab of stone, like the great structure of marble, is clothed in the inner splendor of its consecration. "All the glory of the King's daughter is within."

In the ordination of subdeacons, the Bishop, after exhorting the candidates to be diligent in the exercise of their duty of caring for the altar, says to them: "For the altar of the holy Church is Christ Himself, according to John, who in his Apocalypse relates that he saw a golden altar, Christ, standing before the throne. . . ."

"The altar is Christ," says a recent writer, "not because in our day the holy Eucharist is reserved in the tabernacle—this was, of course, not the custom until a few centuries ago—but because by the anointing with chrism it became a symbol of Christ."

It is the consecration of the altar which identifies it with Christ, which clothes it with beauty and splendor, no matter how poor it may appear to the eye. In that solemn ceremony the altar is treated as though it were a living person, in fact as the person of the Incarnate Word.

The rite consists of three clearly-marked phases, the baptism of the altar with Gregorian water, the entombment of the relics, and the anointing with the holy oils. The theme of the rite has been called by a liturgist the "Christification" of the altar, that is the identifying of Christ with the altar, symbolically. Through its consecration, the altar, a gift to God representing the Church, is symbolically changed into

Christ, becoming, thenceforth, God's gift to the Church, just as the Spouse, the Church, becomes one mystical body with Christ; just as, in the Mass, the gift of the Faithful becomes Christ and thenceforth His gift to us.

The Gregorian water with which the altar is first sprinkled is a mixture of wine, water, salt, and ashes. According to Durandus, the wine represents Christ and the water the Faithful, just as they do in the mingling of the chalice at Mass. Salt symbolizes faith, and ashes repentance. Therefore, the symbolism suggests that the altar by this baptism is reclaimed for the use of those who with faith and repentance in their hearts seek Christ. Accompanying these dramatic and symbolic rites are beautifully expressive prayers, the study of which would greatly increase our appreciation of the true significance of the altar. For example, after the first part of the rite, the bishop concludes as follows: "We suppliantly pray to Thee, Lord, that Thou, who didst once write the Law on tables of stone, wouldst now command the finished material of this stone which is about to be dedicated for divine sacrifice to be enriched with the abundance of Thy holiness."

The relics of the saints are then enclosed in the altar, "because they are one body with Christ, from whom all their sanctity flows. Baptized with Him, anointed with Him, they also are the incense of prayer. . . . Thus the altar represents both the Redeemer and the redeemed. . . ."

The entombment of the relics of those friends of God who made for His sake the supreme sacrifice, whose relics therefore will make the altar more attractive to the Holy Spirit, is followed by the most solemn part of the rite, the three anointings, two with the oil of catechumens, and the last with holy chrism.

The concluding ceremony is a vivid reminder to the Faithful that their sacrifice and prayers, kindled by the Holy Spirit, are to be a continuous offering to God, of which offering this altar is a witness stone.

The Bishop places upon each of the five crosses cut in the surface of the altar-table a cross of incense, made up of five grains, and on top of that a cross of wax tapers. These are lighted and the wax and incense are consumed together, while the Bishop prays "that Thou wilt at all times relieve the anxieties of Thy servants supplicating Thee here, wilt cure sickness, wilt hear prayers, wilt receive vows, wilt confirm desires, wilt concede petitions, through Christ our Lord."

The solemn ceremony which I have outlined is prescribed for the consecration of a stationary altar. The consecration of the portable altar, or altar-stone, though a less solemn function, includes the three phases, the blessing with Gregorian water, the entombment of the relics, the anointing with the holy oils; and the symbolical meanings of these ceremonies are the same. Truly, in the words of the Psalmist, the altar is "clothed with beauty and girded with splendor." It is the house of God and the gate of heaven; it is Christ Himself.

Spiritually and symbolically, the altar is Christ. Materially, it is a structure of stone, in the form of a table, or a small square of stone set upon a structure of any material, wood, stone, bronze, or precious metals. Essentially the altar is the table of the Christian Sacrifice. The first Christian altar was the table of the Last Supper. We picture it to ourselves, perhaps according to Da Vinci's conception, an oblong table of wood, absolutely simple in its design, covered with a white linen cloth. The thirteen persons seated at it are on one side of its length, and all are turned to the beautiful, benign Figure in the center, whose gracious hands are about to take up a chalice. The picture is beautiful and soul-satisfying even if it misrepresents the historic truth. For we cannot now be sure what sort of table was sanctified by the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. In the basilica of St. John Lateran there is preserved a rather long table-top of

ordinary wood, rough, and discolored by age, which is traditionally regarded as the holy table of the Last Supper. It is preserved as a precious relic in one of the tribunes of the basilica, and only on rare occasions exposed for the veneration of the Faithful.

The wooden altar was therefore the first type used, and continued in use in the first centuries, though very early the altar of stone began to be employed from the custom of offering the holy Sacrifice in the catacombs on the tombs of martyrs. Since the sixth century the stone altar has been prescribed, together with the entombment of first-class relics of martyrs. The only exception to these rules is the papal altar in St. John Lateran which consists of a stone altar built over a wooden one, which is itself a precious relic, the altar at which St. Peter offered the Holy Sacrifice, carefully preserved throughout the centuries.

Although the variety of forms of the altar is sometimes confusing, every Catholic knows that there are three principal parts, the table, some kind of supporting structure, and the sepulchre containing the relics of the martyrs. The altar at the present time frequently has one or more ledges or steps at the back of the table, used for candle sticks and vases, and sometimes a back structure called the reredos, whose purpose is chiefly ornamental, sometimes rather doubtfully so. The reredos developed from the medieval custom of erecting shrines for the relics of the saints behind the altar. It is an unfortunate development, an excrescence which sometimes disfigures the altar, frequently obscuring the significance and destroying the symbolism. At its best, however, the reredos suggests the beauty and majesty of the heavenly courts, especially when it contains niches for not-too-large statues of the angels and saints who worship before the throne of God.

The baldachin or ciborium is a medieval feature of the altar which is coming more and more into use

again. Frequently it has the form of a dome resting on pillars. It is often of marble or precious stones or metals. The bronze baldachin of the papal altar in St. Peter's, supported by twisted pillars of richly gleaming bronze, towers to a height of more than ninety-five feet under Michaelangelo's marvelous dome. Much has been written about the colossal grandeur of St. Peter's, and anyone who has seen it cannot but feel that it is fitting that external splendor should manifest in all the world the majesty of God and the splendor of His courts. But we realize, too, that the essential glory of the altar is invisible and manifest only to the inner eye of faith and devotion. The Spouse offers her Beloved houses of gold and silver and alabaster; yet He disdains neither her poverty nor the simplicity which circumstances sometimes make necessary.

I am irresistibly reminded here of other altars which make a startling contrast to the high altar in St. Peter's: one, for instance, in the crypt of the basilica, where we heard Mass one Easter Monday. It was a nondescript altar, a simple table, unadorned, surrounded by tombs. The people crowded close to the step during Mass, and we were amused by the diminutive altar boy who, when he thought they were crowding too close, would wave them back with an authoritative gesture. The practice of crowding close to the altar where Mass is being said is very noticeable in Rome, and it was lovely and heartening to see the Roman crowds thronging like birds to the grains of corn wherever a priest appeared vested for Mass. Some of them would run through the nave to the altar, and, if there was no order in the assembly, there was a deeply-felt devotion manifest in their desire to be as close as possible to the altar, which is, after all, the true hearthstone of the Faithful, the hearthstone of their Father's house.

I cannot resist digressing for a moment to say that we discovered after Mass that this simple altar was

near the tomb of Pope Pius X, an unadorned sarcophagus of plain stone with a simple inscription, and a wreath lying upon it. There were people praying there every time we visited it; a tender devotion to the "Pope of the liturgy" seems to be quite universal.

Whether the altar be of marble or porphyry or alabaster, with a baldachin of bronze or of silver or of gold, or whether it be a small stone slab set against a ledge of rock in an Alaskan volcanic crater, or as some members of our families may have seen, in the mud-walled chamber of a trench dug-out, or whether it be the Mass-rock where a hunted priest risked saying Mass for his flock among Ireland's wild hills, the altar is the same everywhere: the altar is Christ clothed with beauty, girded with splendor, worshipping the ever-blessed Trinity with continuous praise, standing as the witness-stone of our covenant with God.

The Liturgy

DOM COLUMBA CARY-ELWES, O.S.B.

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WE can get deeper still into the nature of Christ's prayer, and therefore our prayer. No matter how much we may discuss the circumference of the liturgy we know where its center is. It is the Mass. This is very important.

It has already been our contention that the liturgy teaches primarily how to pray in public, and secondarily therefore something of dogma. But to say that is to stop at the threshold of the subject, just where it is becoming interesting. The note of awe that is struck in the liturgy is not peculiar to the Christian religion; clearly it is the note of natural religion, the attitude of the creature to his Creator, and as such will be caught up in Catholicism as all the natural virtues are. What then is the essential note of the Catholic worship? Of course we eliminate the fact that it is sung, that it is in symbols, as being too extrinsic to be vital. The Mass is the center of the liturgy, and the Mass is nothing else in its essence than the sacramental representation of Calvary, the repetition of the Last Supper. Obvious? Yes. We all know that. But in relation to the liturgy its importance cannot be exaggerated. The worship of Christians is not platonic, it is not philosophic recognition of the godhead (with a small "g") but an act of sacrifice. It is our joining in with the death of Our Divine Lord. It is our sharing in His sufferings. It is our offering up ourselves as holocausts. Nothing else will do. In proportion to the perfection of the holocaust of ourselves will be the union with Our Lord. No amount of high faluting prayers or thoughts will get us anywhere near God; no amount of plainsong, no matter how well sung, no

matter how perfectly we perform the ceremonies; no matter how well we know the origin of every little bow in Mass; unless we have this one essential thing, the spirit of sacrifice, we are nowhere. Change the word charity into liturgy in the great passage of St. Paul on charity in his epistle to the Corinthians and it would not be too strong, for the Christian sacrifice is not only the act of justice to God, but an act of love. It is the supreme act of love to give one's life. The liturgy merges into Charity.

To sum up. What is the liturgy? It is the official public worship of God. Therefore primarily it teaches how to pray. All the other value as educative is secondary and therefore subordinate to this. What does it teach us in the way of prayer? That prayer is rational, objective; that we should use our imagination, not be puritanical; that prayer is sober and not an emotional effusion; that prayer is simple and yet supremely reverent, impregnated with the spirit of awe; that prayer is not separable from Christ and His Calvary; that the supreme prayer is sacrifice, worship. We cannot rise with Christ till we have died with Christ.

If all this is true, as I firmly believe that it is, it will make perhaps some difference in the way we set about spreading the liturgical spirit.

Unfortunately the liturgy is not something that teaches itself, it is not, as it was once, an explanation by sign and word of what is afoot, but rather a mystery. It is true to say that we have to teach the liturgy rather than the liturgy teach us.

How are we going to set about it?

(1) We must explain the essential nature of the Mass.

(2) We must stress the supreme importance of the Mystical Body; how we are part of a whole and not lonely travelers to heaven.

(3) We must disseminate missals and even encourage the use of laymen's breviaries.

(4) We must teach the cycle of the year, and the way of joining in with Christ's sacramental life.

(5) We must explain the exterior actions of the Mass.

(6) We must encourage plainsong, and all that helps to bring the laity into the action of the Church's public worship.

But if the first and the second are neglected, it will all be useless. It will be the body without the soul. But when vivified by the spirit, what a great song of praise it becomes, what poetry of love and of reverence to the Fashioner and Lover of men! Monsieur Paul Claudel has expressed it well in the account of his conversion:

"But the great Book which lay open before me, and in which I did my schooling, was the Church. Praised for ever be that gracious Mother, at whose knees I learned all. Every Sunday I went to Notre Dame, and I went as often as possible on weekdays. I was then as ignorant of my religion as one can be of Buddhism, and behold the sacred drama was displayed before me with a magnificence which exceeded all my dreams. Ah! It was no longer the feeble language of devotional books. It was the profoundest and most grandiose poetry, the most solemn action that has ever been granted to human beings to do. I could never have enough of the spectacle of Mass, and each movement of the priest cut deep into my mind and into my heart."

There, indeed, is one for whom the externals of the liturgy are lit up by the internal significance.

Let us end with the words of Pius X:

"Let the Faithful as much as is possible cooperate in the sacred mysteries, for it is there primarily and necessarily they will catch the true Christian spirit."